

Meeting Date: November 2007

Agenda Item No. 12

Agenda Item: Lake Pend Oreille Update

Bureau Chief Approval: _____

Prepared by: Chip Corsi

Background:

Historically, Lake Pend Oreille supported more angler days than any other water body in Idaho, with a fishery based on kokanee, trophy rainbow trout, and trophy bull trout (including world records for both rainbow and bull trout); fishing effort has declined substantially with the decline of kokanee. The declining kokanee population in Lake Pend Oreille has been a concern since the 1980s. Declines could initially be attributed to lake level management (Corps of Engineers operation of Albeni Falls dam on the lake outlet) affecting kokanee spawning habitat. Lake level issues have been addressed, but since the late 1990s populations of kokanee predators (lake trout, rainbow trout, bull trout) have increased, and survival of older age kokanee has declined precipitously. In 2000, the harvest fishery for kokanee was discontinued, and aggressive measures to control predator numbers were initiated.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy issues:

IDFG is responsible for management of the Lake Pend Oreille fishery, although bull trout are currently listed under the ESA. Two major mitigation programs are in place to offset the impacts of the downstream Albeni Falls Dam (BPA mitigation) and the upstream Avista Corp. hydroelectric projects (Avista mitigation). Both programs contribute significantly to fishery restoration efforts on the lake.

Public Involvement Process:

Since spring of 2006 the Lake Pend Oreille Fishery Recovery Task Force has been meeting regularly. The Task Force consists of citizens representing different aspects of the angling community, and serves as a “think tank” and sounding board for the Department, and has contributed substantially to the management actions currently in place on the lake. In addition, IDFG holds an annual “State of the Lake” meeting each winter, and newsletters go out quarterly to participants in the Angler Incentive Program. Presentations are periodically made at club and other meetings. Funding for Avista mitigation projects is the result of projects going through review by the 27 stakeholder signatories to the Clark Fork Settlement Agreement, which establishes the mitigation program for the Clark Fork Hydroelectric projects.

Staff Recommendation:

Information for Commission.

Justification: